

Letter to the Editor

Boating Rules and Regulations

During Memorial Day weekend, thousands of people in our county will be launching their boats and transporting their PWCs to nearby lakes and rivers. Saratoga County Clerk Kathy Marchione reminds boaters to make sure that they are in compliance with all necessary registrations and regulations before they head to the water. All pleasure vessels that are in any way propelled by mechanic means must be registered with the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles. Vessel operators, whether or not they are the owner, must carry this registration on board at all times. Registration numbers, at least 3 inches high, must be painted or permanently attached to both sides of the vessels bow, and validation stickers affixed to both sides of the hull. New York State 3 year registration is still among the least expensive in the Northeast. Current fees are as follows: vessels less than 16 feet - \$18 (plus \$3 surcharge); 16 to 26 feet, \$36 (plus \$10 surcharge); over 26 feet, \$60 (plus \$15 surcharge). County Clerk Marchione stated that 75% of all registration fees collected from boaters is returned to the counties to support local marine law enforcement efforts. In addition to boats, all boat trailers must be registered, insured and inspected, much the same as cars.

No one may operate a vessel on the waters of New York State while impaired or intoxicated either through the consumption of alcohol or drugs. New York law prescribes heavy fines, imprisonment, and/or the suspension of operator privileges for violators. In 1999, the Zero Tolerance Law went into effect and applies to boat operators as well as drivers of automobiles. Any person under the age of 21 found drinking while operating a boat or PWC will have their operating privilege revoked or suspended. County Clerk Marchione said, "Many a pleasant day on the waters has been ruined by irresponsible boaters who drink while operating a vessel. It is important to avoid alcohol when boating, (but) and equally important to prevent friends and family from irresponsible boating as well."

If you have a son or daughter under the age of 18, be aware that a New York State Safe Boating Course is mandatory in order for them to operate a personal water craft. These courses are offered in many locations and to find out the nearest one to you, call 1-800-336-BOAT. Also, a review of "rules of the nautical road" is a good idea for everyone – new boaters as well as seasoned ones. The "New York State Boaters Guide" can be found on-line at www.nysparks.state.ny.us or picked up at your nearest Saratoga County Department of Motor Vehicle Office. Help make our waterways a fun and safe place for everyone this summer.

Kathleen A. Marchione
Saratoga County Clerk